

Roberts, James Alexander

April-June 1915

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April 5th, 1915

Lt.-Colonel Roberts,

Toronto.

Dear Colonel Roberts:

I enclose you a letter from Dr. Mallory.

You may remember that he sent us a cheque for \$200 towards the University Hospital. I should think that he is a very good man, and would fill such a position as he applies for if there were an opening. I told him that I knew you had difficulties in Ottawa in securing even the number that are now on the staff, and I am doubtful whether you could have an addition made.

Yours sincerely,

President.



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

St. Martin's Plain,  
Shorncliffe Camp,  
England.

June 16th, 1915.

Dr. R.A. Falconer,  
President of the University of Toronto,  
Toronto, Canada.

Dear President Falconer,--

You have not heard any word from us for the very simple reason that so far we have done nothing to justify writing you.

We had a pleasant but crowded voyage across the Atlantic, which the congeniality of our party rendered particularly pleasant, in spite of the many inconveniences with which we had to put up. However the Allan Line Company and the Officers of the "Corinthian" did all they could to make conditions as pleasant as possible for us, - for which we are very grateful to them all. We, as you know undoubtedly, reached Plymouth on the morning of the 27th of May and early in the afternoon disembarked at Devonport.

The Nursing Sisters were ordered to proceed to London and I telegraphed the Matron-in-chief when they were departing, asking her to meet the train and have all arrangements made for their billet. This, I believe, was carried out without a hitch, so that our Nurses were very soon comfortably quartered in the Kingsley and Thackeray Private Hotels, off the Museum District. They had practically nothing to do for about two weeks, which time they spent getting acquainted with London and seeing all there was to see of interest. In this way they had a very pleasant time.

Since that time, the Matron-in-chief has made arrangements whereby they are placed in various hospitals in this country and in Northern France, which arrangement is to obtain until we are outfitted and are in a position to take up our duties at the site allotted to us.

The Officers and men were sent to the Canadian Headquarters Camp at Shorncliffe and the men were placed in hutments on St. Martin's Plain, while the Officers were billeted at the Hotel Metropole, Folkestone. Everything is very comfortable and we are carrying on the work so far as we are able from a military standpoint. The Officers are separated to a slight extent for the time being; - McVicar and Duncan Graham being at "Cliveden"; Campbell with the 25th Battalion; and others are doing duty on the standing medical Boards of Moore Barracks Hospital; while still others of my Officers are daily allotted duties in connection with other Canadian units in the vicinity. In this way we are not altogether idle and the men are getting training in the various branches of the medical work which will help materially when we are established in our own Hospital.



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

President Falconer,-

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I have written Dr. Clarke at some length giving him some hints as to some of the difficulties one meets, - and my troubles in regard to the unit have not ended by any means. However I will not bother you with them as you will not be in a position to help me with them at present and I will try to carry things through as they stand without causing you any trouble.

Our location has not been chosen yet as far as I know, but the authorities are very stingy in the matter of divulging information on this or any other subject. Most of the information I have gathered has come through roundabout channels and some of it I know it was not intended that I should learn. However I think that everything will work out satisfactorily and that as soon as our Ordnance equipment, -kitchen outfits, beds, tents and other heavy material can be secured, we will soon be placed, as I believe the services of big hospitals are very urgently required.

As you know, we were informed at home that all our heavy equipment had been shipped to England by the Ordnance Department at Ottawa. Whether this was done or not I cannot say but my impression is that it has been shipped and that, being urgently required at the front, the equipments for Nos. 3 and 4 General Hospitals have been taken for other units in France and we have been forced to mark time here until another lot can be gathered together.

McGill has just gone away from this camp although they had been here for almost a month previous to our arrival. They have been meeting much the same conditions we have been experiencing, their Nursing Sisters still being away from them. However after a good heart to heart with the two senior Officers in the Canadian Medical Service here I think I succeeded in impressing upon them the advisability of not interfering with the establishment and personnel of our University units, and in fact I was told that when the time came for us to work together as a unit all of Nursing Sisters, Officers and men would be restored to the unit.

We are all well but chafing a bit under the enforced delay. As soon as anything further develops that may be of interest I will write you concerning it.

So far as the disbursement of funds is concerned I am moving very slowly, until I see what the authorities here intend doing. They seem to have learned that we have a fund at our disposal and someone has also told them of our preparedness in the line of bedding, dressings and other things of that character. The earliest impression that one received was that they wished to capture our stock and pool it in a general fund, so that as soon as I learned of the possibility of any such move I immediately lost almost 600 cases which I hope to keep under cover until I require it. So far nothing active has been done to dispossess us of our stores and I assure you nothing will be done if I can possibly prevent it.

Trusting that you are well, I remain,

Yours very sincerely,

*J. Roberts.*

Lieut.-Col.  
O.C. #4 C.G.H. U. OF T.

June 30th, 1915

Lt. - Colonel J. A. Roberts,

St. Martin's Plain,

Shorncliffe, England.

Dear Colonel Roberts:

I was very glad to hear from you on Monday.

Your letter to me was exceedingly interesting, and Dean Clarke gave me the reading of his. I am sorry that you have found yourself in difficulties already. It seems that there must be a good deal of mismanagement at Headquarters somehow in England. It is too bad that any of our equipment should be diverted from the use for which it was prepared, but I am glad that you have been able to retain so much of it.

The rumour reached us that there was a possibility of the unit being broken up, and I immediately telegraphed to General Hughes and told him that it would be a breach of faith with the University and our subscribers if such a thing should happen. He cabled to England, and has since informed me that there is no foundation in the rumour, so I hope it is set at rest.

One hears the report that there is a possibility of our Hospital being sent to Malta. You will know more about this than I do, and it may be mere rumour.

Yesterday Dr. Rudolf gave us an interesting account of what he saw of you in Shorncliffe, and told us something of his own experiences, so that we begin to realise rather vividly what you are doing. Dr. Primrose has also sent me a set of photographs

that he took.

Money continues to come in for the Hospital. We received \$500 from our New York graduates recently, and the ladies are still at work, so that we are still thinking of you. A special number of "Varsity" should be out shortly, and with it the work of the year will close.

I am always glad to hear from you, and shall be glad to let you know from time to time how this end is progressing. With kind regards, I am,

Yours sincerely,

President.